

## Социологические науки

УДК 303.01

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### Conceptions of social reality

#### Представления о социальной реальности

**Annotation:** the article analyses the idea of social reality. The article deals with two concepts: subjectivism and objectivism. The article analyses in more detail the ideas about the social reality of M. Weber and E. Durkheim.

**Аннотация:** в статье анализируется представление о социальной реальности. В статье рассматриваются две концепции: субъективизм и объективизм. В статье более подробно анализируются представления о социальной реальности М. Вебера и Э. Дюркгейма.

**Key words:** social reality, subjectivism, objectivism.

**Ключевые слова:** социальная реальность, субъективизм, объективизм.

An analysis of the concepts of social reality existing today reveals the main positions that its researchers can take as subjects of social and philosophical knowledge. In the classical type of rationality, social reality is presented as objective, independent of the researcher, and the principle of reflection lies at the heart of the method of cognition. The non-classical type demonstrates the situation of subjective constitution and construction of sociocultural reality, as well as its objectification and internalization in intersubjective interaction. Here the main principle is the principle of reconstructive and phenomenological research.

Methodologically, social reality has been interpreted in different ways, which has a long history. Therefore, at an early stage in the existence of sociology as an independent science, the so-called organic school arose (G. Spencer, A. Scheffle, A. Espinas, etc.), whose representatives interpreted social reality as a kind of organism, working by analogy with a biological one.

Among the concepts that interpret the nature of social reality, two extreme positions can be distinguished: one belongs to those researchers who argue that social reality is determined by the actions of individual individuals, and the other belongs to supporters of the point of view that collective formations are the basis of social life: social structures, institutions, community.

These opposing concepts are commonly referred to as subjectivism (or methodological individualism) and objectivism (or methodological collectivism). Both points of view go back practically to the moment of the formation of sociology as a science (the second half of the 19th century). During this period, K. Marx, H. Spencer, E. Durkheim developed the ideas of objectivism, and subjectivism existed in the form of psychology of J. S. Mill, G. Tarde, G. Le Bon.

Karl Marx's thesis that "it is not the consciousness of people that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness" quite eloquently characterizes the objectivism attitudes, which have found their further and the most striking continuation in the concept of sociological realism by E. Durkheim. According to this concept society as a whole, as well as individual social institutions, is an independent entity, irreducible to the interaction of individual individuals. The true carriers of social reality are supra-individual wholes, interactions of individuals become social only by joining super-individual forms. According to E. Durkheim, social reality consists of social facts, which exert external coercion on the individual and at the same time have their own existence, independent of individual manifestations. From this point of view, the individual and his activities are forced dependent on certain collective phenomena that constitute the core of an independent autonomous social reality.

An important, and often misunderstood, element of Durkheim's sociological method is to be found in what can be termed Durkheim's social realism, or the idea that society is an objectively real entity that exists independently and autonomously of any particular individual, a view that is epitomized by his prescription to treat social facts as things. Within this realist position there are two important claims. First, Durkheim makes an ontological claim concerning the sui generis reality of social facts. Second, Durkheim makes an epistemological and methodological claim, arguing that social facts should be treated as real objects, existing external to the researcher's mind, that can be determined by their ability to coerce behavior. Hence, Durkheim is arguing that social facts have particular properties of being and that they can be discovered and analyzed when the sociologist treats them in the proper, scientific way.

These elements of Durkheim's sociology have led to some confusion. Some critics claim that Durkheim is guilty of saying that social facts exist independent and outside of all individuals, which leads them to think that Durkheim hypostatizes some sort of metaphysical "group mind." Other critics argue that Durkheim is guilty

of an ontologism or a realism in which he considers social facts to be material properties of social life.

Durkheim strongly refutes such accusations. In response to the first critique, it must be remembered that social facts are both exterior and interior to individuals, with externality in this case meaning interior to individuals other than the individual subject. As Durkheim argues, social facts exist in a special substratum of the individual mind. His position then ultimately is that while the social fact is unmistakably a sui generis product of social interaction, it is produced and resides exclusively in this special substratum of the individual mind. To say that social facts exist independent of all individuals is an absurd position that Durkheim does not advocate. Only on a methodological level, in order to study social facts from the outside as they present themselves to individuals, does the sociologist abstract social facts from the individual consciences in which they are present. In response to the second critique, Durkheim maintains that social facts, as products of the psyche, are wholly ideational and do not have a material substratum. They can only be observed through the more or less systematized phenomenal reality (to be analyzed as empirical data) that expresses them. By stating the reality of the ideational realm of social facts in this way, treating them as observable things of the natural world while maintaining they are ideal, Durkheim's social realism can be seen as an attempt to bridge diverging schools of philosophical thought, such as realism and nominalism, or empiricism and idealism.

Subjectivism, having arisen as an attempt to explain social phenomena by referring to psychological phenomena, at the beginning of the twentieth century found its embodiment already in the purely sociological concept of nominalism by M. Weber, according to which the starting point of sociological analysis is not social education as an independent whole, but the individual and his social action. Any social education in this case should be considered as a product of specific actions of individuals. According to M. Weber, such concepts as "state", "community", "feudalism", etc. mean "categories of certain types of joint activities of people and the task of sociology is to reduce them to" understandable "behavior, and such reduction always means only one thing - reduction to the behavior of individuals participating in this activity." At the same time, social reality can only be understood by penetrating subjective meanings of the subjects of social action. Thus, the strategic element of this sociological paradigm is not social facts, but the way in which the social facts. Social reality in this paradigm acts as a set of meanings and symbols, in the form of which the actors evaluate their social environment.

M. Weber directly links social action and the subject of sociology, characterizing the latter as a science that seeks to interpret and understand social action and thereby causally explain its process and impact. M. Weber gave a clear definition: "Social" we call such an action, which, according to the supposed actor or actors, the meaning correlates with the action of other people and is guided by it. Two basic features of social action are highlighted here: fullness for the actor with

meaning and orientation towards another person. The power of Weber's construction lies in the fact that it contains the primary cell, the simplest combination from which the social begins.

The category "social action" is a powerful analytical tool that allows you to identify the basic mechanisms of the formation of the social. Let's look again at all the resulting "formulas" of social action: an actor (actor), a meaningful orientation of the actor towards the "other", while the "other" can be represented by one person or many people, personified, or impersonalized, or act in a "generalized" form; The "other" can be directly perceived by our senses at the moment of the action or not perceived; the actor can be guided by actions (that is, something manifested in physical reality) or expectations (something not manifested in physical reality). Let us take out, as in mathematics, the elements repeated in all formulas - "actor", his orientation towards "others", "out of brackets". The rest of the elements are not constant in this "formula". The participation of "others" in the formation of the social is very interesting. It turns out that their actual presence is optional. The main thing is for these "others" to be in the "head" of the actor, so that ideas about their actions and expectations work as determinants of behavior.

In conditions when there are two opposing points of view, concepts will inevitably appear that seek to combine the achievements of both directions in one theoretical construction. In the second half of the twentieth century, many variants of such a synthesis were proposed.

One of the most significant and productive is the socio-phenomenological theory of P. Berger and T. Luckmann. The starting point of this synthesis is the assertion that society creates individuals, who create society. According to this concept, "the social structure cannot be characterized as some kind of independent thing, separate from the human activity that produced it, but once created this the structure is perceived by the individual as an alien factuality and as a compulsory instrumentality." This model combines both voluntaristic idealism in understanding the social structure and mechanical determinism in understanding the actors. That is, the identity of the subject is determined by the social structure and, conversely, the identity created through the interaction of the individual consciousness and the social structure reacts to the given social structure, supports, modifies or even reconstructs it. In this concept, a person acts as both the "creator" of the social world and its "victim", because it is held captive by the meanings, symbols, institutions that he once created. From the point of view of social phenomenologists, if the object of analysis becomes integrity, which includes both the individual and society, then this avoids distortions in the understanding of social reality inherent in both structuralism (as an objectivist concept) and psychologism.

E. Durkheim subdivides social facts into morphological, constituting the material substrate of society, and spiritual, existing in the form of "collective representations": a set of opinions, knowledge, methods of action, etc. Collective

representations from the point of view of E. Durkheim as a representative of methodological collectivism are the product of a long-term development of society and are forcibly imposed on each individual: "Collective representations are a product of a vast, almost immense cooperation ... To create them, many different minds compared, brought together and connected their ideas and their feelings, and long rows of generations accumulated their experience and knowledge".

The significance of collective representations, according to E. Durkheim, stems from the fact that not only accumulated knowledge is concentrated in them, but also the most general ways of understanding the surrounding reality, without which "any agreement between individual minds would become impossible, and therefore would become impossible and any life together. "

For M. Weber, it is possible to understand a social phenomenon only by interpreting the subjective meanings and meanings through which the acting subjects determine the situation of interaction. For example, according to M. Weber, "sociology, to the extent that" law "falls into the orbit of its research, is not concerned with identifying the logically correct" objective "content of" legal provisions ", but with actions as determinants and the results of which can, of course, play a significant role ... people's perceptions of the "significance" of certain legal provisions. " In addition, according to M. Weber, the subject of sociological analysis alongside with subjective meanings is all the diversity of ideas, opinions, beliefs, perceptions, images of the world.

Apparently, it is not accidental that both M. Weber and E. Durkheim turned to the analysis of the role of religious beliefs in the life of society.

All these concepts emphasize the important role in the life of society, the constitution of social phenomena and processes of representations, systems of meanings and meanings, symbolic structures, that is, the sphere representation by acting subjects of their social environment.

In the opposing paradigms of objectivism and subjectivism, based on the recognition of the dominant role of one of the levels of social reality, there is no need to localize the sphere representation in social reality: it necessarily takes place at the dominant pole. The concept of synthesis is another matter. They lack such dominance and, therefore, the question of the localization of representative forms remains open.

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